

January 20, 2019

Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection

Through ultrasound images, we can see that unborn babies at 20 weeks can suck their thumbs, yawn, stretch, and make faces. Babies born prematurely, as young as 20 weeks post-fertilization, can survive and thrive with appropriate care and treatment.

About eight years ago, research studies began demonstrating that an unborn child could feel pain as early as 20 weeks post fertilization. More specifically, the studies showed that the babies recoil from stimuli that would normally be recognized as painful and that they also show significant increases in stress hormones. Other studies found that the use of anesthesia in fetal surgeries after 20 weeks is becoming routine as it is recognized that the babies will react to the pain caused by the surgical procedure.

As our understanding of unborn life has grown, it has become obvious that more protections are needed for the thousands of babies who are subject to excruciating pain when they are killed in late term abortions. As a result, legislators have begun developing laws to protect vulnerable pain-capable unborn babies. To date, 20 states have passed legislation limiting abortion after 20 weeks. In addition, the House of Representatives passed the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act which would generally ban abortion nation-wide after 20 weeks unless the abortion is deemed to be necessary to save the life of the mother, or is the result rape or incest. It imposes a criminal penalty against any person performing an abortion after 20 weeks, but also bars any prosecution of a woman receiving such an abortion. The Senate has not yet passed this legislation. It is sad to note that the United States is one of only seven countries that permit elective abortion beyond 20 weeks. The other countries are Canada, China, the Netherlands, North Korea, Singapore and Vietnam.

Closer to home in New Jersey, there is a movement, known as the 20/20 Project, whose goal is the passage of legislation to protect pain-capable unborn children (those beyond 20 weeks) by the year 2020. Please contact your state assembly persons and senators to support this goal. Postcards are available at all Masses this weekend. Please add your name and address to the cards, drop them in the back of the Church or in the Rectory and we will see they are delivered.

We also ask for your prayers for the babies who are victims, the mother and fathers who are making a decision or who have made a decision to abort their babies, and finally for the legislators who can prevent this barbaric practice. Our faith teaches us to defend the right to life from fertilization to natural death. We must demonstrate the conviction and courage to stand up and protect pre-born children like Governor DeWine and the Ohio legislature, rather than celebrate the passage of bills intended to terminate a baby's life up to the moment of birth, as done by the NY legislature and Governor Cuomo last week.

Let your voices be heard!